

Collins receives French Legion of Honor

Astronaut Eileen Collins was recently bestowed the French Legion of Honor for her unique contributions to humankind through her significant role during STS-93.

In a ceremony in Bldg. 9 September 21, François Bujon de l’Estang, Ambassador of France to the United States, presented Collins with the medal and commended her for fostering a cooperative relationship between France and NASA, as well as her “spirit of cooperation” with French astronauts.

“French Authorities are giving you, and through you, all the men and women who work hard to further the cooperation between our nations translate into a common endeavor in space, further proof of the esteem of the French people by conferring upon you the Legion of Honor with rank of Officer,” said Bujon de l’Estang.

Col. Collins was lauded, not only for her role as the first female to command a space shuttle mission, but also for her ability to lead the crew, which included Pilot Jeffrey Ashby and Mission Specialists Steven Hawley, Ph.D., Catherine Coleman, Ph.D., and European Space Agency Astronaut Michel Tognini from France.

“Heroism does not only belong to the lone adventurers,” said Bujon de l’Estang. “but to a united crew, perfectly coordinated and trusting each others’ knowledge and experience. Cooperation and trust are the key elements to the success.”



NASA JSC Photo 2000-06298 by Benny Benavides
Astronaut Eileen Collins, far left, with husband Pat Youngs and daughter Bridgette, are all smiles with François Bujon de l’Estang, Ambassador of France to the United States. Bujon de l’Estang presented Collins with the French Legion of Honor during a September ceremony.

The Ambassador included in his remarks an overview of the role France has played in the space program and its involvement with the growing International Space Station before presenting the Legion of Honor insignia to Collins.

“Presentation of this award, to me, does not signify the end of a task or a project, but a personal challenge to me as I begin new tasks and projects,” said Collins. “I want to thank you for

challenging me and my colleagues to stay highly motivated, to seek better, more cooperative and more productive ways to do things in the future.”

Collins made a point of commending her crew, as well as the flight directors and training team who were in attendance, for their contributions to the mission’s success. ■

White Sands Missile Range inducts first NASA employee into Hall of Fame

White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico, inducted its first NASA employee into its Hall of Fame on September 21.

Alex Paczynski became the first NASA employee inducted into the White Sands Hall of Fame. Paczynski was cited for his work at White Sands Missile Range in establishing and maintaining the range’s NASA space shuttle training and landing strip.

Paczynski was introduced to White Sands in 1956 when he worked for the Douglas Aircraft Company as the test director on the Nike Hercules missile program. During a four-year period at White Sands, Paczynski oversaw more than 100 missile firings for Douglas.

In 1964, Paczynski returned to New Mexico when he joined the NASA White Sands Test Facility on the west boundary of the missile range.

In the 1970s, when NASA started looking for a site to train space shuttle pilots, Paczynski took it upon himself to propose the missile range’s Northrup Strip as a training site. He convinced NASA training program personnel that the strip would be ideal for their needs. They liked it, and he then went about convincing other NASA managers, White Sands Missile Range and Holloman Air Force Base.

Paczynski was persuasive. According to Christopher Kraft, former director of the Johnson Space Center, “The landing strip has been used extensively by the Shuttle Training Aircraft, a modified



Brigadier General Steven Flohr, commander of the White Sands Missile Range, inducts Alex Paczynski, right, into the White Sands Hall of Fame.

Gulfstream transport. In fact, every shuttle commander and pilot has practiced their landing approach at the range provided by this facility.”

Paczynski earned the job as program manager for Northrup Strip. Next he convinced NASA and military officials that the strip could, with just a few upgrades, handle real shuttle landings. According to Major General Niles Fulwyler, former commander of White Sands Missile Range, “It was Al who first envisioned the possibility of making Northrup Strip an alternate landing site

for the space shuttle. He was confronted with many obstacles, both political and physical, but by his total dedication and perseverance, ultimately his vision came true.”

By the time the first shuttle mission flew, Northrup Strip was ready. Then, on March 30, 1982, after its third flight, the Space Shuttle *Columbia* landed at Northrup Strip. The U.S. Congress changed the name of Northrup Strip to the White Sands Space Harbor after the landing.

Paczynski continued to manage the Space Harbor until he retired from government service in 1995. According to Fulwyler, it was because of Paczynski’s vision that NASA and White Sands Missile Range have such a first-class training and landing facility for the Space Shuttle Program.

Paczynski was born in Niagara Falls, New York, in 1931. He attended high school there. He earned a bachelor of science degree in electrical engineering from the University

of Cincinnati in 1955. Later he earned a master of science degree in mechanical engineering from New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

Hall of Fame induction is the highest honor White Sands can pay one of its own for outstanding service. Only 29 people have been inducted including Dr. Wernher von Braun, the famous German and American rocket scientist.

Paczynski and his wife, Audrey, live in Las Cruces, New Mexico. ■

Krishen receives Third Millennium Medal

Dr. Kumar Krishen, chief technologist in JSC’s Technology Transfer and Commercialization Office, received the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers’ Third Millennium Medal during a special IEEE Galveston Bay Section Awards Evening September 21 at the Nassau Bay Hilton.

Frank Benz, director of engineering for NASA/JSC, and Ken Reightler, vice president, space operations, for Lockheed Martin in Houston, presented the award.



NASA JSC Photo 2000e23534 by Robert Markowitz
Dr. Kumar Krishen

“It is a great honor for me and my employer NASA/JSC to receive this once-in-a-millennium award,” said Krishen. “It only shows that NASA provides you with opportunities to excel by technically challenging you to the maximum.”

Dr. Krishen has advanced original concepts concerning remote sensing, health systems, science payloads, sensor systems, communications and tracking systems, mission support technologies, and automation and robotics technologies. His research and engineering efforts have led to several experiments on Skylab, Seasat, and the space shuttle and to the publication of more than 120 technical papers, presentations and reports – 45 of which have been published in books, technical journals or society proceedings.

Dr. Krishen has advanced technology substantially through his involvement on agency, interagency and international panels and committees. He is the post-doctoral advisor to the NASA National Research Council Program and doctoral advisor to the NASA Graduate Program and the NASA Summer Faculty Program. Through these programs, he has guided more than 12 fellows in engineering and science-related programs.

Dr. Krishen is a fellow of the Society for Design and Process Science and serves on the editorial boards of the Journal of Integrated Design and Process Science, the International Journal of Advanced Manufacturing Systems and the Indian Journal of Radio and Space Physics.

The criteria to receive the medal include outstanding contributions to a section, community, chapter, area of technology or outstanding contribution to their board. The Galveston Bay Section received seven medals from the list of nominees submitted last year, marking the highest recognition GBS members have received for their contributions to the advancement of electrical, electronics, photonics, and computer engineering. ■